

ASBESTOS

closes two Morris firms

By DORY DEVLIN

The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) yesterday closed two Meyersville businesses to the public because of asbestos contamination from the nearby former National Gypsum plant in Millington.

Recent soil tests and house samplings on White Bridge Road and New Vernon Road found asbestos present in the area, which lies about seven miles from the Millington federal superfund site.

"We found it (the asbestos) had spread around more than we believed," said EPA spokesman Richard Cahill. The National Gypsum property was put on the superfund list in the early 1980s, and plans to clean up the site and environs currently are under study, Cahill said. The company produced cement asbestos siding and roofing sheets that contained the substance, which is hazardous when airborne.

As a result of the recent findings, EPA officials yesterday posted "Danger, Asbestos Area" signs at the Meyersville Horse Farm on White Bridge Road and a tree service firm on New Vernon Road. The proprietors and residents on the two sites were advised to temporarily relocate, Cahill said.

"I'm not leaving. I've been here 20 years and I worked with asbestos before," said Dave Major, co-owner of the stable.

He said the 18 horses he and his wife board at the farm are being relocated by their owners, and that he hopes the problems are resolved as soon as possible. "I just want my property back the way it was."

Because both operations generate dust, the EPA determined they should be closed pending further test results, Cahill said. The tree service proprietors could not be reached.

Major and Passaic Township Administrator Lynne Combs noted the EPA made its decision without testing air samples. Soil samples and dust accumulated in vacuum bags in a few homes showed high levels of asbestos in some cases, leading the agency to determine a potentially serious health hazard could exist, Cahill said. The soil on the horse farm indicated a strong presence of the substance, although the Majors' home did not show high levels, according to the EPA.

EPA officials will return to the properties, including 12 homes in Meyersville, next week to begin more in-depth samplings of the air, soil and groundwater and surface water, Cahill said. Agency representatives met yesterday with township officials and residents about their plans.

The site is one of 110 superfund sites in New Jersey targeted for clean-

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